

(a) whether it is a fact that the Income Tax officers have decided not to process any of the IT returns submitted through post offices, Nation-wide;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the amount of money paid to the Department of Posts for rendering this service; and

(d) what steps are proposed to be taken to process these IT returns and to enable the refund without delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Representations have been received from the Income tax Employees Federation and Income tax Gazetted officers Association in this regard pointing out that they are opposed to outsourcing of work of the Income-tax Department.

(c) It has been decided to pay an amount of Rs. 100 to Department of Posts for each return received in the post office.

(d) It has been decided to process these returns centrally. It shall facilitate issue of refunds quickly.

World Bank ranking of India on Trade

†606. SHRI BALAVANT ALIAS BALAPTE:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL WAS:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that World Bank and International Finance Corporation in one of its reports have ranked India at 134th position amongst 175 nations with regard to trade;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the report also mentions the slow adjudication process and stringent labour laws in India as impediment in this regard; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction on the report and the scheme being formulated by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Yes, Sir. A World Bank and International Finance Corporation report titled "Doing Business 2007" has

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

ranked India at 134th position amongst 175 world economies on the ease of doing business.

(b) and (c) The report also, *interalia*, states that India is amongst the countries where it is most difficult to enforce a contract -and to fire employees.

(d) Although the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in the report do not reflect the views of Government of India, procedural simplification and removal of bottlenecks for business is an ongoing process, which the Government is addressing continuously through its various policies and programmes.

Suicide by farmers

†607. DR. PRABHA THAKUR.

SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the main reason behind the suicides by the farmers in the country is their inability to pay the loans;

(b) whether Government propose to make bank loans free of interest to bail out such indebted and needy farmers from the clutches of committing suicides in famine affected areas and in those areas where the agriculture production is affected by other reasons; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) No, Sir. The reasons behind the suicides by the farmers are many. Excessive borrowing from formal and non-formal sources, social tension, continuous drought affecting the yield and their income, emerging changes in social milieu and alienation of the individuals from family and society are some of the major reasons reported, for the distress situation of the farmers leading to suicide.

(b) and (c) There is no proposal to make bank loans free of interest as this will affect the viability and stability of the banks. However, to address the issue of farmer's distress, the Govt. of India has announced a rehabilitation package in the identified 31 debt stressed districts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. The package provides for:—

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.